

TWANGING THE BANJO.

Class with a Maker and Master of the Popular Instrument.

"It is said that you are the pioneer banjo-maker and teacher of the city," said the reporter to a jolly, red-faced little man, with slightly gray hair and a stoop in his shoulders, and as the banjo is coming into use as one of the most popular instruments of the day, I have come to have a talk with you on the subject.

"Quite right, quite right," I have been here since '85, but I declare, the present craze for banjo music beats anything I ever saw. Not only here, either, but all over the country they have taken the thing up, in some cases to the exclusion of pianos and other instruments, especially accompaniments for ballads, that it is a wonder it has not had a run like this before. The banjo is, however, though, that people did not like the idea of playing on an instrument that was so strongly associated with darky life in the south, and with negro minstrelsy in general. Time has wrought a great change in the notions of the people in this regard, and the humble banjo has been elevated to the rank of a musical instrument in general. The banjo, as it is manufactured, is not an instrument to be sneezed at or coughed down when it is in the hands of a player who knows how to get music out of it. Another thing about the banjo: Almost any one with an ear for melody can pick up a tolerably fair knowledge of it in a few weeks, with a little kind application. That is why so many people who don't want to spend two or three years learning the piano have begun to twang the banjo. I have pupils all over the city from Tarata to Nob Hill. I make the banjo for them after they have taken a few lessons and know what kind of an instrument they want, high-priced or low, maple frame, mahogany, nickle frame or silver hoop.

A list of the pupils was shown, and it was found to be long, including, as the teacher remarked, persons of all grades in life. It was matter of note that a large number of well-known young ladies in society have shown themselves to be devoted to the art of playing this once-contemptuously treated instrument.

"I can teach almost any young gentleman or lady how to play the banjo in two courses of ten lessons each, which is doing better than most banjo teachers. I taught Lotta how to play in 1861. Well do I remember the night she made her first appearance as a banjo player in the opera house. They made her play until her fingers were sore and her voice was hoarse from singing. In those days hardly any one played the banjo off the stage. Now you hear it everywhere. They sell them at all the music stores, and the heavy demand has contributed not a little to the present boom in the music trade. I wouldn't advise any one to buy a ready-made banjo, however. It's just like buying ready-made clothing or shoes. The best article is that made to order by a man who understands what a banjo should be and how to perfectly suit his customer. Besides, you often have to pay an outrageously high price for a \$30 banjo if the ready-made manufacturer—where \$25 to \$30 would be a good price for the one.

No one will hesitate about playing on this simple instrument when it is known that fashion and culture have placed upon it the imprint of their approval. The banjo has been a popular instrument in first-class society in England for the past two or three years. I had the honor of selling an elegant concert banjo to a member of the princess royal party during their visit to this city two years ago, and giving him a few lessons. From this gentleman I learned that Lady Randolph Churchill, Lady Mandeville, and many others of equal rank are skillful banjoleers. The earl of Dunraven, it is said, has the finest collection of banjos in the world, including one worth \$3,000, having a solid gold hoop, fine rosewood neck, ivory frets, and decorated with broad silk ribbons, on which are painted ferns and leaves. The English players order all their banjos from America. The idea of making them does not seem to have struck the manufacturers of musical instruments over there, or, what is more likely, they don't know how. In making a good banjo you must have the right kind of wood, for one thing. My handles and rims are all given three years to season in before they are used for making banjos. I have handles in my shop that were saved out fourteen years ago. If a banjo is made of wood not thoroughly seasoned, it will warp and twist out of shape. Many of our banjo makers don't seem to understand this.

How to Make Copying Ink.

(Chicago Times.)
Any common black ink or writing fluid can be made into good copying ink adding some sugar or other saccharine matter to it. To prepare, dissolve one ounce of lump sugar in one and one-half pints of writing fluid. Within five or six hours after writing letters or other documents with this prepared ink they can be copied by pressure on damp, unsized paper. The old writing is wet with a weak solution of sulphate of iron, to which a small solution of sugar syrup has been added, a faint reproduction can be taken with firm pressure upon unsized paper, with the result of rendering the original much paler than before, as the process simply dissolves the original ink used and transfers it. To copy printing ink, dampen the surface with a weak solution of acetate of iron and press on any paper of absorbent nature.

A Beautiful Mineral.

(Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly.)
Jade, that beautiful green or olive-brown stone, out of which the quaint and valuable antique carvings of China and Japan were cut, has never been known in America as a native mineral. Alaskan Indians, and especially the Innuit of the northwestern coast, possess implements made of it, and many of these have been obtained for our museums by recent explorers. This caused inquiries to be made and it has thus been learned that veins containing jade occur in the mountains on the Alaskan side of Behring strait, although not on the Siberian shore. The Innuits call the jade "fire stone," and told E. W. Nelson that it was "made in a very hot fire," when some of the volcanic cones of that region were in a state of eruption.

Decline of the Nose.

(New York Times.)
The gradual decline of the human nose is the result of the introduction and general use of handkerchiefs. The Romans never used handkerchiefs, and their noses, as we all know, were of the largest and finest type. Moreover, they were less liable to cold in the head than are people of the present time, and their noses enjoyed almost a secure. As civilization advanced northward from Italy the inhabitants of the cold and variable climate of northern Europe found that their noses were constantly called into activity, and as a consequence the average European nose fell below the Roman standard. Within modern times the handkerchief was invented, and a new and potent factor in the reduction of noses thus came into existence. Constant friction will wear away the hardest stone, much more the soft and cartilaginous nose. Under the friction of handkerchiefs the noses of the present century have steadily diminished, until small noses are worn almost as much as spectacles.

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